

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC BOARD, WEDNESDAY 13 AUGUST 2008

Report of the Vice-Chancellor

1. University's Financial Position

The mid-year forecast of the University's 2008 financial position is for an underlying operating surplus of \$6.6 million (1.5% of turnover), and a total surplus of \$22.0 million, which includes a capital grant of \$14.3 million from the Commonwealth under the Better Universities Renewal Funding initiative.

The forecast underlying operating surplus results from careful management of resources, and initial cost savings generated by the organisational change program ('Renewing La Trobe') launched in May.

It is anticipated that the underlying financial position of the Australian higher education sector will deteriorate in 2009, because of constraints on international fee revenue (a result of global economic downturn and the high relative value of the Australian dollar), the need to respond to the current pay claim from NTEU, and the under-indexation (by 2%) of Commonwealth grant income.

The La Trobe University strategic plan sets a goal of an operating surplus of 5% by 2012, and the 2009 budget will be framed to achieve a surplus of 3%. The achievement of this target will require concerted focus on internal cost containment and on revenue growth.

2. Review of Higher Education

I joined other Vice-Chancellors from the Innovative Research Universities to meet with the Review Panel in Canberra on 25 July. The Panel also visited La Trobe's Wodonga campus on 7 August to discuss higher education issues with representatives from our regional campuses and communities. I also represented La Trobe at a roundtable discussion of the Higher Education Review with Minister Jacinta Allan.

La Trobe's response to the Review Panel's discussion paper can be read at: http://www.latrobe.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/20256/submission-review-higher-education.pdf

3. Capital Developments

- (a) At the 7 July meeting of Council it was decided not to proceed with the delivery of teaching programs from the Argus building in the Melbourne CBD. Work is currently under way to evaluate options on the building
- (b) The University is required to submit to DEEWR by 31 August a program of capital works to be funded by the \$14.72 million capital grant received under the Better Universities Renewal Funding Initiative, announced in May. The Director of Estates Strategy has undertaken a review of recent capital investment and of existing capital funding proposals. Investment in the teaching and learning infrastructure at Bundoora has accounted for only 3% of all capital commitments over the last 9 years. It has been decided to allocate the

majority of the BURFI funding to create enhanced learning spaces for students at Bundoora. Projects will include:

- reconfiguration and extension of the Library to create enhanced student learning facilities
- creation of a Student Hub and additional learning spaces in ground level of Thomas Cherry Building
- laboratory refurbishment in order to relocate microbiology from ground floor of Thomas Cherry
- additional investment in teaching and learning ICT infrastructure and equipment.

(c) The University is submitting two bids for funding from the Higher Education Endowment Fund:

- Northern Victoria School of Rural and Regional health (\$31.3 million)
- Australian Institute of Molecular Medicine (\$45 million)

4. International Recruitment

Acceptances for Semester 2 were up 2% on 2007, but conversion of acceptance to enrolment has been much lower than in previous years, leading to an estimate of final numbers between 5% and 10% less than semester 2, 2007. Much of the downturn is attributable to a significant drop in the India market. The challenges in the international recruitment market underscore the need for La Trobe to strengthen its pathway programs.

5. Faculty Activities

(a) Staff

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

- The Serle Award for the best postgraduate thesis in Australian history went to Marina Larsson for her PhD thesis 'The Burdens of Sacrifice: War Disabilities in Australian Families, 1914-1939'. Marina is currently lecturing in the La Trobe History program.
- The Ernest Scott Prize for the best book in Australasian History went to John Fitzgerald for his book 'Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia'. It was considered to be an outstanding and timely contribution to the field.
- In addition to the prizes awarded at the Australian Historical Association Conference, at the AGM Marilyn Lake was elected Vice President/President elect of the AHA. Congratulations are extended to Marilyn for this honour and recognition of her service to the History profession.

Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering

- On the 3rd of July the Nancy Millis Lecture was presented by Professor Myron Levine. The topic was 'Vaccines, Global Health and Social Equity'.

Faculty of Education

- Two new appointments have been made within the Faculty of Education. Professor Tanya Fitzgerald will take up an appointment in

January as Professor of Educational Leadership and Management within the Faculty of Education and will be based at Bundoora. She will also undertake the role of Academic Director at Bundoora campus within the Faculty. Dr Mary Keefe will begin as Associate Professor in the area of Special Needs Education in October. Dr Keefe will be based at the Bendigo campus.

Faculty of Law and Management

- Congratulations to Dr Damien Eldridge (Lecturer, School of Business). Damien was this year's joint winner of the Jan Whitwell Prize. He won the prize for his paper "Multiple Interactions and the Management of Local Commons". The Jan Whitwell prize is awarded for the best presented paper at the annual conference of the NZAE by a current student or recent graduate.

(b) Students

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

- The W.K.Hancock Prize for the best first book in any field of History went to Robert Kenny for his book, 'The Lamb Enters the Dreaming'. Robert undertook his PhD at La Trobe and is now an ARC Postdoctoral Scholar in the program.
- Archaeology PhD student David Thomas has had wide coverage on his use of Googlemaps to virtually explore and research archaeological sites in Afghanistan. The story was featured on websites, in print and David was interviewed on ABC radio. The story was also reported internationally.

Faculty of Law and Management

- Sport and Leisure Management student Jonathan Robertson was recently awarded a Sport and Tourism Youth Foundation scholarship valued at \$10,000 at a Gala dinner in Sydney. The Foundation is chaired by ex Tourism and Sports Minister, John Brown, with over 50 scholarships presented to young people from the sporting, performing arts and tourism sectors.

Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering

- One of our talented 4th year Pharmacy students, Ms Bella Diprose, has won the Victorian State heat of the Pharmacy Student of the year competition and will compete against Pharmacy students from other states in the final to be held at a Pharmacy Conference in Perth in late October.
- Zoology PhD student Julian Finn received a wide amount of coverage across all media in Australia and abroad for his participation in the recent dissection of a giant squid at Melbourne Museum.

Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Equity & Student Services)

- Over July and August, La Trobe University will be participating in the Australasian Survey of Student Engagement (AUSSE). Student engagement is measured through the level of student involvement in activities which result in high quality learning. Administered by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), the AUSSE has

been designed to assist institutions gain more insight into how and why students engage in the academic and social aspects of University life.

The survey will target first and third year students across all campuses, and this year teaching staff will also be surveyed to better understand their perceptions on how often students engage in different learning activities and the importance staff place on learning and development. The results of this should help to identify gaps between student and staff expectations and to engage staff in the process of improving and enhancing student engagement.

(c) Research

Faculty of Health Sciences

- The School of Public Health had an excellent outcome in the 2008 VicHealth Grants, with receipt of four grants. Dr Bircan Erbas was awarded the International Cancer Fellowship and will be travelling to visit the Department of Biostatistics, Harvard School of Public Health to develop research models in statistical methods for breast cancer. Ms Genevieve Howse has begun work on the AusAid funded project on Model Public Health Law for the Pacific. Dr Simon Barraclough and Adjunct Associate Professor Heather Gardner published *Analysing Health Policy. A Problem Oriented Approach*. Mr Stephen Polgar and Dr Shane Thomas published the 5th edition of *Introduction to Research in the Health Sciences*.
- The Public Health Student Association had a paper accepted at the 2008 Population Health Congress on the CCV 123 Program which the Student Association sponsored last year. An incredible achievement for a largely undergraduate student group.
- Ms Nilva Egana (current MHS(PHP) student) was invited to the NHHRC's Melbourne round of consultations through her involvement in the Health Informatics Society of Australia and her participation in the Victorian Public Health Training Scheme.
- Jane Sheats (current MHA) won the Anthony Suleau Prize and Richard Ainley (MHA graduate) won the Ian Brand Prize for academic achievement from the Australian College of Health Service Executives to be awarded at the August congress.
- Dr Helen McLachlan (Mother and Child Health Research (MCHR) and Division of Nursing and Midwifery), Dr Della Forster (MCHR), Ms Mary-Ann Davey (MCHR), Ms Therese Cotter (Barwon Health) have been successful in receiving funding (\$57,562) from the Victorian Department of Human Services to undertake an evaluation of maternity services at Barwon Health. It is a collaborative project between Barwon Health, Mother and Child Health Research and Division of Nursing and Midwifery, La Trobe.
- A Bachelor of Nursing Mental Health Major student, Tamsyn Opie, will present a paper titled, "Music Therapy in Acute Psychiatric Facilities: An Undergraduate's Perspective" at the 34th Australian College of Mental Health Nurses International Conference to be held in Melbourne in October 2008.
- Recent news from the Albury Wodonga campus is that Dr Jeni Warburton has been appointed to the John Richards Chair of Rural Aged Care Research and will commence in mid-September. Dr

Warburton is currently Senior Research Fellow at the Australasian Centre on Ageing at the University of Queensland.

- DHS has funded the project led by Professor Annette Street entitled Evaluative Life Review and Advance Care Planning (ELT/ACP): a sustainable strategy for self-determination in small rural communities? The project will run for 3 years and the funding is \$150,000. Mary Taylor has commenced work on a PhD funded through this grant. Professor Annette Street has been granted funding totalling \$35,000 by Prostate Cancer Foundation Australia for projects on the role and scope of practice of the prostate care nurse and the development of a web portal to provide online resources for these nurses.
- Recent news from the Musculoskeletal Research Centre is the establishment of low back pain group led by Dr Jon Ford and MRC and A/Prof Tim Bach. This group was featured on ABC's Catalyst program on July 31 in relation to the prostheses used by South African sprinter Oscar Pistorius
- Recent news from AIPC is that the Australian Journal of Primary Health has joined EBSCO and has been listed with Thomson ISI. The National and Victorian Primary and Community Health Networks, convened and supported by the AIPC, made submissions to the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission. The National Network (interested non-government organisations, interested academics and jurisdictions) also met to discuss development of a National Primary Health Care Strategy. Notes from this meeting were sent to the Federal Minister.

Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering

- A new \$30 million Federal Government-funded Cooperative Research Centre for Biomarker Translation (CRC-BT) was officially launched at the Research & Development Park on Monday, 21 July. Together with \$6 million from participants and more than \$100 million “in-kind” funding from its partners over seven years, the CRC is tackling the challenges of cancers and immune diseases as a “pipeline” project in five stages across a broad front. It is simultaneously targeting the discovery, development, clinical and diagnostic efficacy and commercialisation of new biotechnologies for diagnostic and therapeutic applications.

Faculty of Law and Management

- Congratulations to Dr Terri Joiner, who is part of a collaborative multi-university research team who received an ARC Linkage Grant for the project, “Australian diasporas and brain gain: exploring current and potential transnational linkages.” Funding will occur between 2008 and 2011, totalling \$1,056,163. Collaborating organisations including the Victorian Multicultural Commission, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues,
- Congratulations to Matthew Riddle, for receiving a grant of funding from the Australasian Society for Computers In Learning In Tertiary Education (Ascilite) for his project, “ICTs in the daily lives of Australian university students”.

6. Alumni

Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering

- Graham Rivers-Brown (2007 CSCE/Electronic Engineering double degree student) has invented a new GPS system that allows the driver to avoid traffic congestion and road works. The concept is generating considerable interest.

7. External Activities

Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering

- The 2008 Victorian Science and Engineering Super Challenge was very successfully hosted by La Trobe, supported by Victoria University and the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development at our Bundoora campus on Friday, 25 July.

Faculty of Law and Management

- The School of Business hosted the inaugural biennial conference of the Global Accounting and Organisational Change (GAOC) network in association with the Journal of Accounting and Organizational Change. The conference was held in Hilton on the Park between 9-11 July 2008. The conference explored the role of accounting in organisational and social change in three concurrent streams over the two-day period. I was pleased to open the conference, whilst the Dean, Professor Raymond Harbridge and the Conference Chair, Professor Zahirul Hoque welcomed delegates from all over the world.

Kerferd Oration

- The 7th Annual Kerferd Oration at the La Trobe University Beechworth campus took place on Sunday, 27 July. I was pleased to introduce guest orator (and alumnus) Tim Flannery, who spoke to an audience of more than 700 people. The event was covered by regional media and a podcast interview is currently available on the La Trobe University website.

Greening La Trobe University Competition

- At the Student Forum on 24 July, I took the opportunity to launch the Greening La Trobe University Competition – this initiative has already engaged keen student participation, and will provide beneficial feedback on this very contemporary issue. A panel, comprising internal and external judges, will evaluate entries later this month.